NCA
VOC FOR PGM/FN
BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5986 JULY 12, 1977
MARK HOPKINS/BERLIN

SUMMIT -- EAST BERLIN

ANNCR:

PRESIDENT CARTER IS SCHEDULED TO VISIT WEST BERLIN THIS SATURDAY DURING HIS SUMMIT TALKS WITH CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT. THERE'S ANOTHER PART TO THE DIVIDED CITY .... AS WE HEAR IN THIS BACKGROUND REPORT BY VOA CORRESPONDENT MARK HOPKINS.

VOICE:

PRESIDENT CARTER WILL LOOK ACROSS THE BERLIN WALL TO AN EAST BERLIN THAT HAS BEEN CONSCIOUSLY BUILT UP AS THE EAST GERMAN VERSION OF A SHOWPLACE. NEW APARTMENT BUILDINGS, WIDE, TREE-LINED AVENUES AND MODERN OFFICE STRUCTURES COMPRISE THE EAST GERMAN COMMUNIST ATTEMPTS TO MATCH THE PROSPEROUS, BRIGHT WEST BERLIN.

WESTERN DIPLOMATS SAY THAT THE STANDARD OF LIVING IS GRADUALLY IMPROVING IN EAST BERLIN. IT LOOKS BETTER, THEY SAY, THAN MOSCOW. THERE IS MORE TO BUY, LIFE IS MORE COMFORTABLE. JUST A FEW DAYS AGO THE ONE MILLIONTH APARTMENT BUILT SINCE NINETEEN SEVENTY ONE WAS FINISHED AND PARTY LEADER ERICH HOENECKER PERSONALLY HANDED THE KEYS OVER TO THE FAMILY THAT WILL OCCUPY THE APARTMENT IN A CEREMONY EMPHASIZING THE STATE'S CONCERN FOR HOUSING NEEDS.

STILL, EAST GERMAN PLANNERS DO NOT EXPECT TO SOLVE THE CRITICAL HOUSING PROBLEM UNTIL NINETEEN NINETY, IF THEN. THERE'S MORE MONEY HERE NOW, AMONG EAST BERLINERS. THE AVERAGE INDUSTRIAL WAGE IS SAID TO BE ABOUT NINE HUNDRED MARKS. AT THE OFFICIAL EXCHANGE RATE, THAT'S ABOUT FOUR HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS. AT THE MORE REALISTIC BLACK MARKET RATE, IT IS LESS THAN A HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS.

BUT EAST GERMANS DO HAVE ENOUGH MONEY THAT THE GOVERNMENT HAS BECOME CONCERNED ABOUT TOO MUCH MONEY IN THE CONSUMER ECONOMY. WEST GERMAN VOLKSWAGENS HAVE BEEN IMPORTED TO ATTRACT SOME OF THE EXCESS BUYING POWER. SPECIAL SHOPS CALLED 'DELIKAT AND EXQUISIT' SELL IMPORTED FOOD AND CONSUMER GOODS FOR EAST GERMAN MARKS. THE PRICES ARE HIGH, BUT GERMANS ARE EAGER TO BUY WESTERN ITEMS.

EAST BERLIN IS UNQUESTIONABLY CUT OFF FROM THE WEST. THE BERLIN WALL IS TESTIMONY, AND EAST GERMANY CONTINUES TO JAM THE AMERICAN RADIO STATION, RIAS, WHICH BROADCASTS FROM WEST BERLIN INTO EAST GERMANY.

BUT WESTERN TELEVISION PROGRAMS CAN BE SEEN IN EIGHTY PERCENT OF EAST GERMAN TERRITORY. THERE ARE TENS OF THOUSAND'S OF VISITORS EVERY YEAR FROM THE WEST. SOME ARE RELATIVES, OTHERS ARE GERMAN AND FOREIGN TOURISTS. EAST BERLIN THUS REMAINS AN UNUSUAL CITY. IT IS CLAIMED AS THE CAPITAL BY WEST GERMANY. IT IS REGARDED OFFICIALLY IN THE WEST AS THE SOVIET ZONE OF A STILL OCCUPIED CITY. BOTH ARE ACCURATE. IT IS THE CAPITAL OF EAST GERMANY AS FAR AS THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC IS CONCERNED. AND WITH TWENTY SOVIET DIVISIONS IN EAST GERMANY, EAST BERLIN IS STILL A SOVIET OCCUPIED CITY.

JS/PY